

But, as I said before, none can be entirely blest here, for if no other evil were to befall us, death—death—the most awful calamity, is the portion of us all. I expect to be contented and happy; yet I also expect occasional disappointments, mortal pains, toil, the decrepitude of old age, and the pangs of dissolution. Still I will be happy; a good, greater than the evil, will follow me, and in the very hour of death my soul will dilate with glorious anticipations of a blessed immortality."

M'Bride.—"I acknowledge that there are degrees in happiness, and that we are blest according to our deeds; but is it not ordained that no one shall go beyond a certain point? I think so, and I believe that individuals and nations have heretofore been as happy as they will be hereafter. If you will look back on the course of things, you will find that there is a certain point of improvement beyond which we are not allowed to pass."

Warden.—"So the ancient navigators thought in regard to the ocean. For ages and ages no one crossed the Atlantic Ocean, and it was supposed that no one could. To attempt it was believed to be a rebellion against the decrees of the Almighty; and yet the madman Columbus sailed fearlessly over the forbidden line, and discovered a glorious new continent. So will it be with our political Columbus; and as much as this continent excels the old ones in the fertility of its soil, the wealth of its mines, and the beauty and grandeur of its scenes, so much shall the wisdom and excellence of our government excel those of all other forms. I tell you there is a good time coming."

The Master.—"So thought the fabled Sisypheus; so man has thought since the day of his fall, and yet every successive generation has followed in the beaten track. There is, indeed, a good time coming; He that cannot lie has promised it, but it will be after the head of the Serpent has been bruised—after the old Dragon, man's immortal enemy, has been seized and bound."

Warden.—"But will we not conquer him by degrees?—gradually narrow the limits of his dominion?"

The Master.—"He will, I fear, still reign in the hearts of a majority, and while that is the case, what hope is there? The fairest, most honest, and best form of government is the democratic; but suppose we had a democracy or republic. For a while the memory of the glorious revolution through which we have passed, and of the virtues of its actors, would keep alive a patriotic spirit; but this cannot long survive. The world is certainly divided into two great classes, and the evil ones are in the majority. These latter will be forever seeking, in all sorts of ways, *per fas et nefas*, to promote their own peculiar

interests, regardless of the rights of others. The others—the minority, who do not so desire, will not be let alone—cannot remain fixed in one position. The man who resolves to attend to his own business, and to be disconnected with the affairs of others, makes a foolish resolution. Even an armed neutrality would be dangerous, for, while he stands with his arms folded, his rights, reputation, and fortune will be leaving him."

Warden.—"Then you think man is the common foe of man?"

The Master.—"He is, not by design, but made so by the ends he aims at. The greater number are aiming at pre-eminence; at the possession of peculiar power, fortune, and privileges. Hence mankind consist, and will consist, of the suers and the sued, of plaintiffs and defendants, oppressors and oppressed. There is no medium class, and those who attempt to form one, and to go harmless through the world, are common spoil, saved only by the contentions of the pirates who may fight among themselves over the prize. It will not do to retire modestly within yourself, hang your head meekly, and shrink timidly from the world. Go where you will, to the most remote and secluded islet on the globe, and some roving plunderer will find you out and spoil you of something, money, lands, name, or position, with which to enrich himself. I tell you, sir, you are on a hostile coast—a great highway of robbers, as old Burton has it, and at every step you must fight or pay tribute to save your skin. Thus it has been, thus it is, and thus it ever will be; the industrious lowlanders, the honest citizens in the quiet vales of life, must be subject to the black-mail levy. Sometimes—as in our own recent case—a whole nation, like a rare individual, will resist this tribute, but, before it is aware of it, will be paying it to others. We refused to be taxed by England, and yet, before your hair is gray, we will be tributary to a host of politicians and demagogues, compared with whose exactions the Stamp Act, and all its concomitants, would have been an easy burden. Alas for the world! I must write a book."

Warden.—"I have often thought that, of all the professions, an author's is the most pleasant. He stands aloof from the world for whose good he is labouring, and with whose evil passions he never comes in contact. The statesman, the lawyer, and doctor, in the prosecution of their callings, and the farmer and mechanic in making a profit on the produce of their labour, have to combat with keen-witted and insatiable avarice, treachery, envy, and detraction. The author is happily freed from this evil."

The Master.—"You were never more mistaken in your life. First, there is the